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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000306

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT DEMARCHE DELIVERED: REPORTING IRAN TO THE UNSC

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Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a January 28 meeting, the Ambassador delivered reftel demarche to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) undersecretary Khaled Al-Jarallah. Al-Jarallah reacted by asking what more the GCC could do, and expressed willingness to pursue the matter further. The Ambassador queried prominent Kuwaiti academics, businessmen, and government officials about the same subject at a lunch meeting the same day. They said that the GCC should take a stronger and more unified stand against Iran's nuclear program. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador delivered reftel demarche during a January 28 meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Khaled Al-Jarallah. The Ambassador stressed the importance of sending a clear political message to the Iranian government (GOI) that the international community opposed its nuclear program by referring Iran to the UN Security Council (UNSC). He also emphasized the important role GCC countries could play in rallying Arab support for any UNSC action against Iran and in downplaying some Arab governments' opposition to potential sanctions. Al-Jarallah said Kuwait and other GCC countries view Iran as "a serious threat." Noting that "we are ready to cooperate and do anything we can do," Al-Jarallah asked for suggestions on how the GCC could cooperate in opposing Iran's nuclear program. While acknowledging the recent GCC joint communique as a positive step, the Ambassador suggested that the GCC could issue a statement supporting referral of Iran to the UNSC, a move he argued would put additional pressure on the GOI and send a clear message that Iranian actions were not acceptable. Al-Jarallah agreed that "we should think about this," and added that this message could also be conveyed bilaterally.

¶3. (C) Al-Jarallah said British officials had conveyed similar concerns during a recent meeting with GCC Ambassadors to the United Kingdom. According to Al-Jarallah, British officials said Iran's nuclear program posed a "serious threat" to Gulf countries and urged the GCC to put more pressure on the Iranian government. Al-Jarallah questioned China and Russia's commitment to referring Iran to the UNSC, noting, in particular, the strong shared interests between China and Iran. He speculated that if the Russian initiative fails, Russia might support a proposal to refer Iran to the UNSC. Al-Jarallah also claimed that India "could be a problem" within the IAEA. Al-Jarallah commented that it would "take time" to build Russian and Chinese support for any UNSC action.

¶4. (C) Al-Jarallah asked if imposing sanction was "the stage before military action." The Ambassador responded that,

while the military option was not off the table, "we are still several steps away from considering military action" and emphasized it is the USG's desire to see a diplomatic, multilateral solution to the problem.

Other Kuwaiti Views

¶ 15. (C) Prominent Kuwaiti academics, business leaders, and government officials, in a January 28 luncheon with the Ambassador, expressed considerable trepidation about Iran's nuclear program. Former GCC SYG Ambassador Abdullah Bishara described a recent seminar he brokered at which Iranian thinkers and officials exchanged candid views with Kuwaiti counterparts. The Iranian officials enumerated a number of reasons why they felt they needed a nuclear program: all the big world powers have them; Iran has more neighbors than any other country besides Russia, and they are all hostile; why should Pakistan, a recent creation of the British, have nuclear weapons when Iran has thousands of years of history; Iran and the U.S. are in a "boxing match" and Iran cannot afford to be weak. Bishara said they noted that they have the technology, the resources, and national pride to carry out the program and to withstand sanctions. He added that the Iranians also said they had "unlimited power of mischief," meaning they could create problems for the U.S. in Iraq, Syria, and other places in the region. Bishara concluded by saying that the Iranians were paranoid, and they were not susceptible to logic or sanctions.

¶ 16. (C) With regard to what the GCC should do about this problem, Bishara said the entire GCC had to come together as a group to insist on a nuclear-free zone in the Gulf. He

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went on to say that GCC countries must stop their word play and come out unequivocally with the international community against Iran's nuclear program. Ultimately, the GCC must also make clear to Iran that it will support referral of its nuclear program to the Security Council. When asked whether such a unified approach by the GCC would deter Iran from pursuing its present course, Bishara and the other Kuwaitis said it was unlikely to work. When other participants in the conversation raised the environmental threat posed by Iran's nuclear program, Bishara was quick to dismiss this concern. The problem with a nuclear Iran is not pollution, he said. It's about changing the balance of power in the region. That's the real danger.

¶ 17. (C) Dr. Nada Al-Mutawa, professor of political science at Kuwait University, said that Oman and Saudi Arabia are not as worried about Iran as the other GCC states and will scuttle attempts to come to a strong unified stance against Iran. Others agreed with this view. For instance, Dr. Moudhi Al-Homoud, Rector of the Arab Open University, said Kuwaiti pronouncements had to link concerns about Iran to Israel's nuclear program as well in order to make its statements credible to the Kuwaiti public. Yousef Al-Ebraheem, advisor to the Prime Minister, played down this point by noting that Israel's program was different because it already exists, whereas Iran's is still in the development phase and could be stopped.

¶ 18. (C) Comment: While Undersecretary Jarallah thought the GCC statement at its Abu Dhabi Summit was a strong one, our lunch table interlocutors thought it was clearly not enough. For reference, the GCC statement called for the Middle East to be a nuclear-weapons-free zone, but refrained from specifically mentioning its concern about Iran's nuclear program (ref B).

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LeBaron